United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General says United Nations will not hesitate to use air strikes if Bosnian Serb forces do not meet deadline for withdrawal from Gorazde exclusion zone; UNPROFOR Commanders assess situation with NATO Chiefs in Brussels.

+ Secretary-General says his presence at Conference on Small Island States in Barbados shows his concern for development issues; notes that 60 per cent of United Nations budget is devoted to development.

+ UNOMSA deploys more than 2,100 personnel as voting begins in South Africa's first democratic elections.

+ Department of Humanitarian Affairs launches emergency appeal for $16.5 million to help those effected by violence in Rwanda.

+ ONUSAL reports no serious disturbances, but some irregularities, as second round of elections begins in El Salvador.

+ Israel tells Committee against Torture of need to strike delicate balance between obligations to combat terrorism and to protect the innocent; says it works hard to prevent unnecessary use of force.

+ Special Mission to Afghanistan completes forth visit to country after meeting leaders in Kandahar; says steps towards permanent peace could lead to international aid for reconstruction and development.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today reiterated that the United Nations would use air strikes "without any hesitation" if the Bosnian Serbs did not withdraw their heavy weapons from the 20-kilometre military exclusion zone around Gorazde by 0001 hours GMT tomorrow. He said he hoped that the Bosnian Serbs would comply with relevant Security Council and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) resolutions, and that air strikes would not have to

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be launched. He made those comments at a press conference in Bridgetown, Barbados, where he was attending the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In a related development, United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) Commanders General Bertrand de Lapresle and Lieutenant-General Michael Rose were in Brussels yesterday and today for consultations with NATO Chiefs-of-Staff, according to a United Nations spokesman. They were undertaking a detailed analysis of the situation on the ground in Bosnia and Herzegovina and analyzing plans and procedures for air strikes. The spokesman stressed that the United Nations had the full support of NATO, and that the involvement of the regional organization was in conformity with the Charter.

Meanwhile, the spokesman continued, the Bosnian Serbs had completed their withdrawal from the three-kilometre exclusion zone around Gorazde which came into effect on Sunday, and the situation there was stable and calm. Humanitarian and peace-keeping convoys were moving into the city, while casualties were being evacuated for medical treatment elsewhere.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today said that his presence at the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States demonstrated his concern for development issues. Speaking at a press conference in Bridgetown, Barbados, he said there was a perception that the United Nations was only concerned with peace-keeping operations, but pointed out that over 60 per cent of the Organization's budget was directed towards development.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, and the 1995 World Conference on Women would reflect the United Nations' commitment to development, the Secretary-General continued. Turning to the issue of "donor fatigue," he said it was important to maintain the momentum of contributions to developing countries. More diplomatic action was needed to convince donors of the importance of development, he added.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General said that the Barbados Conference came at a decisive moment in the history of development, and that the international community would look to it for leadership. It must draw attention to the special needs of small island developing States and address the particular issues that concerned them. It must also build on the achievements of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. He stressed that the Organization was uniquely suited to helping advance development goals, with its unparalleled body of knowledge, expertise and goodwill.

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The United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) today announced that it had deployed a total of 2,120 personnel as the country's first democratic elections got underway. More than 200 volunteers had been

deployed last month, while 1,481 observers had arrived in South Africa last week. Observers were deployed in some 60 teams throughout the country, and sub-teams consisting of two observers were expected to visit as many voting stations as possible at least once during the voting.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali intends to visit South Africa for the inauguration of the new President, which is scheduled for 10 May, a United Nations spokesman said today. He noted that the new South African flag would be raised at Headquarters for the first time tomorrow morning.

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The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has launched an emergency appeal to meet the immediate needs of those effected by the violence in Rwanda. It is seeking $11.5 million for United Nations agencies and $5 million for non-governmental organizations.

Meanwhile, there was less gunfire in Kigali today after the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) unilaterally declared a cease-fire, but the situation in the city was still tense, according to a United Nations spokesman. He warned that there was a danger of epidemics because of the large number of unburied bodies in the capital's streets, and noted reports of widespread violence elsewhere in the country.

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The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) has said there were no serious disturbances when the country's elections began on Sunday. Some 900 ONUSAL observers reported that the second round of voting was better organized than the first, with the use of guides to direct voters, free public transport and the early release of election results.

However, there had been a number of electoral irregularities, according to ONUSAL. Some Voting Table Committees (JRV) had not opened or closed on time and both parties had complained of illegal campaigning inside the voting centres. ONUSAL also reported that many citizens had been unable to cast their ballots despite having voting cards.

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The State Attorney of Israel, Dorit Beinish, said yesterday that as acts of violence increased in her country, a delicate balance had to be struck between the obligation to protect the lives of the innocent and the means employed to achieve that aim. Introducing Israel's report to the Committee against Torture in Geneva, she said that officials sometimes erred in their actions and that the test of the system was how it reacted to such aberrations. Israel worked hard through legislation and judicial and administrative review to prevent and punish the unnecessary use of force.

Responding to Israel's report, Canada said neccessity was not a useful defence. Denmark said terrorism could not be eradicated by torture, which was not the best way to get information and did not solve political problems.

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The Secretary-General's Special Mission to Afghanistan has completed its fourth visit to that country after spending Saturday in the southern city of Kandahar. The head of the mission, Mahmoud Mestiri, appealed to local officials to exercise their historical leadership role and to be builders of peace. The first step would be to form a broad-based administration which would allow the United Nations to expand its work in the region. He said that once the international community saw the first steps towards a permanent peace, there could be offers of assistance for reconstruction and development.

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